

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-13. (cancelled)

14. (New): A ground apparatus for loading and unloading an aircraft having a cargo compartment, said apparatus comprising:

a segmented conveyor comprising a connected succession of conveyor units interconnectable by coupling members that allow pivotal movement between each of said conveyor units,

said segmented conveyor having a first end disposed to be placed adjacent said aircraft and a second end,

said segmented conveyor having a first end conveyor unit arranged at said first end of said segmented conveyor, and

said segmented conveyor being at least partially extendable from said apparatus into said cargo compartment,

said apparatus being constructed for storing said conveyor in a folded configuration wherein at least one portion of said conveyor is positioned over at least one other portion of said conveyor when the succession of conveyor units is in a retracted position.

15. (New): The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said first end conveyor unit comprises at least one cargo lifting device having a variable inclination.

16. (New): The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said apparatus further comprises a pivoting element coupled with said at least one cargo lifting device, said pivoting

element configured to allow an operator to cause a horizontal pivoting movement of said at least one cargo lifting device.

17. (New): The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said apparatus comprises a second conveyor above said segmented conveyor, said second conveyor having a first end disposed to be proximal to said aircraft and a second end opposite thereto.

18. (New): The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said second conveyor comprises an endless conveyor belt.

19. (New): The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said first end of said second conveyor is approximately coplanar with said second end of said segmented conveyor.

20. (New): The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said second conveyor is height-adjustable or tiltable or both height-adjustable and tiltable.

21. (New): The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said apparatus further comprises a bridge member having a first end affixed at said first end of said second conveyor, said bridge member utilized to support said segmented conveyor between said second conveyor and said cargo compartment.

22. (New): The apparatus of claim 21, said bridge member being pivotally affixed at said first end of said second conveyor such that said bridge member can be configured to be approximately horizontal.

23. (New): The apparatus of claim 14, wherein each conveyor unit comprises a driven endless conveyor belt.

24. (New): The apparatus of claim 23, wherein each endless conveyor belt is driven by a driving roller, and said each conveyor unit further comprises at least one roller supported by a frame which in turn is supported by a support member having wheels.

25. (New): The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the width of said conveyor belt is greater than the distance between said rollers.
26. (New): The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said coupling members comprise releasable couplings.
27. (New): The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said conveyor units comprise a mechanism for extending said segmented conveyor from said apparatus.
28. (New): The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said coupling members further comprise pivots between adjacent conveyor units, said pivots allowing at least limited vertical pivotal movement of a conveyor unit with respect to an adjacent conveyor unit.
29. (New): The apparatus of claim 28, said pivots being adjacent the outer periphery of said conveyor units.
30. (New): The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said apparatus further comprises a control system whereby an operator present inside the aircraft can control said segmented conveyor.
31. (New): The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said apparatus further comprises at least one cargo lifting device control system whereby an operator present inside the aircraft can control the inclination of said at least one cargo lifting device.
32. (New): The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said apparatus further comprises a second cargo lifting device at said second end of said second conveyor, said second cargo lifting device having variable inclination
33. (New): The apparatus of claim 32, wherein said apparatus further comprises a second cargo lifting device control system whereby an operator outside the aircraft can control the inclination of said second cargo lifting device.

34. (New): The apparatus of claim 33, wherein said apparatus further comprises a second pivoting element coupled with said second cargo lifting device, said second pivoting element configured to allow an operator to cause a horizontal pivoting movement of said second cargo lifting device.

35. (New): The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising a vehicle.

36. (New): The apparatus of claim 17, wherein a portion of said segmented conveyor beneath said second conveyor is generally parallel and adjacent thereto.

37. (New): The apparatus of claim 36, wherein the portion of said connected succession of conveyor units not beneath said second conveyor and generally parallel and adjacent thereto are stored in a folded configuration wherein at least one portion of said conveyor is positioned over at least one other portion of said conveyor when the succession of conveyor units is in a retracted position.

38. (New) The ground apparatus of claim 14, said apparatus being constructed for storing said conveyor in a folded configuration wherein at least one portion of said conveyor is positioned over at least two other portions of said conveyor when the succession of conveyor units is in a retracted position.